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TELEGRAM (773)

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 02082 300632Z

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S E C R E T SAIGON 2082

CINCPAC FOR POLAD
EXDIS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 10/5/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON (S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☑ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

1. DURING A CONVERSATION JULY 29 WITH GENERAL THIEU I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS PLANS FOR THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND PARTICULARLY REGARDING PARTICIPATON BY HIM AND KY IN THE OFFICIALLY PLANNED ACTIVITIES BY CANDIDATES. THIEU SAID THAT HE AND KY PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHEDULED RADIO AND TV APPEARANCES AND THEY WOULD TRAVEL TO THE IMPORTANT CENTERS OUTSIDE OF SAIGON AND NEARBY AREAS WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES. HE SAID THEY WOULD NOT MAKE ALL THE PLANNED PERSONAL APPEARANCES,

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 2082 S E C R E T
HOWEVER, SINCE THIS WOULD INTERFERE SERIOUSLY WITH THEIR GOVERNMENT DUTIES.

2. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTTION ABOUT THEIR PLATFORM AND CAMPAIGN APPROACH, THIEU SAID THAT THEY WOULD HANDLED THEIR CAMPAIGN IN A MODERATE AND LOW KEY FASHION. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THEIR TICKET HAD CERTAIN INHERENT ADVANTAGES, IN PARTICULAR IN MEETING POPULAR DESIRES FOR STABILITY, CONTINUITY AND SECURITY, WHICH THE MILITARY ELEMENT CAN BEST PROVIDE. AT THE SAME TIME THE ARMED FORCES WOULD BE AMONG THE STRONGEST

SECRET

Saigon 2082 Pac 14 Vers XR Pac 15-1 Vers

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 02082 300632Z

PROPONENETS OF PEACE SINCE THEY WERE THE HEAVIEST SUFFERERS FROM WAR. HE ADDED THAT OBVIOUSLY A LARGE MEASURE OF MILITARY SUPPORT WOULD ACCRUE TO THE TICKET ALSO AND THEY WOULD NOT WISH TO APPEAR TO BE EXERTING PRESSURE ON EITHER THE ARMED FORCES OR PROVINCIAL LEADERS. HE PLANNED TO STATE THIS CLEARLY AND PUBLICLY ONCE AGAIN.

3. I RAISED WITH THIEU THE SAME SUGGESTION I HAD MADE TO KY (SAIGON 2029) ABOUT THE POSSIBLE USEFULNESS OF PICKING OUT SOME VC RALLIERS WHO MIGHT BE CANDIDATES IN THE LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS. THIEU RESPONDED FAVORABLY

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 2082 S E C R E T
IN TERMS OF ITS USEFULNESS IN PROMOTING THE CHIEU HOI AND DOAN KET PROGRAMS. HE SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WAS REALLY IN FINDING QUALIFIED MEN, SINCE MOST OF THE RALLIERS WERE RELATIVELY UNEDUCATED. HE ALSO THOUGHT THEY MUST COME FROM THE DISTRICTS THEY REPRESENT. HE AGREED TO PURSUE THE MATTER, HOWEVER.

4. IN DISCUSSING THE UPPER HOUSE LISTS, THIEU COMMENTED ON THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM FOR THE AVERAGE VOTER AND CONFIRMED KY'S COMMENT TO ME ABOUT AFFILIATING THE SLATES TO THEIR OWN TICKET, COMPOSED OF PEOPLE WITH WHOM THEY CAN WORK. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES WORKING TOGETHER IN WARTIME. I NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN A NUMBER OF PROTESTS REGARDING UPPER HOUSE LISTS WHICH HAD BEEN DISQUALIFIED AND OBSERVED THAT THE US PRESS HAD ALSO BEEN CRITICAL. THIEU SAID HE RECOGNIZED THIS AND ADDED THAT HE WAS REVIEWING THESE PROTESTS PERSONALLY. HE SIAD THAT SO FAR HIS CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE DISQUALIFICATIONS WERE JUSTIFIED ON THE GROUNDS GIVEN.

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 2082 QQS E C R E T
5. I ASKED THIEU WHETHER HE THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE WITH THE EXTREME BUDDHIST OR COMMUNISTS ELEMENTS DURING

SECRET

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 02082 300632Z

THE CAMPAIGN. HE REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD ACTIVELY CREATE TROUBLE DURING THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF. HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD WORK "UNDERGROUND" ADVISING PEOPLE TO VOTE AGAINST THE MILITARY TICKET. HE ANTICIPATED THAT IN I CORPS AND PRTS OF THE DELTA SOME OF THE GROUPS WOULD THROW THEIR ACTIVE SUPPORT TO PHAN PHAC SUU RATHER THAN HUONG. THIEU SAID THESE ELEMENTS THOUGHT SUU WAS MORE FAVORABLE TO THEIR INTERESTS AND ALSO HAD THE ADDED PRESTIGE OF AGE AND WHITE HAIR (VERY IMPORTANT) AND PROJECTED HIS IMAGE AS A BENEVOLENT CHARACTER).

6. THIEU THEN LAUNCHED INTO AN INTERESTING DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF AGE IN TERMS OF POLITICAL SUPPORT. HE SAID THAT BOTH IN TERMS OF ELECTIONS AND IN THE PACIFI- CATION PROGRAM, AND INDEED IN THE WHOLE REALM OF BRINGING THE COUNTRY INTO THE MODERNAGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE OF AGE ON THE ATTITUDES OF THE VILLAGERS. THE COMMUNISTS IN THE BEGINNING HAD FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THIS

PAGE 5 RUMJIR 2082 S E C R E T
AND AS A RESULT HAD HAD FREQUENT FAILURES. THIS IN PART EXPLAINED HO'S INFLUENCE. WHETHER OR NOT HE EXERCISED THE REAL POWER, WITH HIS WHITE HAIR AND BEARD AND BENIGN MANNER HE PRESENTED AN IMAGE OF GREAT WISDOM. THIEU SAID THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO INSTILL NEW IDEAS, FOR EXAMPLE WITH RESPECT TO PACIFICATION, WAS FIRST TO CONVINCE THE ELDERS WHO WOULD THEN BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE YOUNGER ELEMENTS TO PUT THEM INTO EFFECT. BUNKER

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